

Christians In Conflict With Evil

[Part 1]

Christians are portrayed in many ways in the New Testament of the Christian Bible.

For example, in Ephesians they are called an assembly, a family, a temple and the Bride of Christ; finally however God's people are likened to an army.

Ephesians 6:10-12 [NIV] *“Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. **Put on the full armour of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.**”*

This Christian army is committed to fight a war that is of cosmic proportions, **not** limited to this earth but extending to the entire created universe.

This titanic conflict staggers the mind when we meditate on it.

Let us consider what is being revealed to us in this passage of scripture.

- 1) This conflict involves **all** Christians, not just pastors or evangelists.
- 2) This is a **total conflict**. The King James translation states we are in a wrestling match. Wrestling is the most intense of any form of conflict between two people. Every part of the body, every skill and every trick must be used for success.
- 3) The enemy Satan, has a highly organised kingdom, and the headquarters of this kingdom is in the heavenly [spiritual] realm.
Matthew 12:22-28 [NIV] *“Then they brought him a demon-possessed man who was blind and mute, and Jesus healed him, so that he could both talk and see. All the people were astonished and said, “Could this be the Son of David?” But when the Pharisees heard this, they said, “It is only by Beelzebub, the prince of demons, that this fellow drives out demons.” Jesus knew their thoughts and said to them, **“Every kingdom divided against itself will be ruined, and every city or household divided against itself will not stand. If Satan drives out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then can his kingdom stand? And if I drive out demons by Beelzebub, by whom do your people drive them out? So then, they will be your judges. But if I drive out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.”**”*
These scriptures give us a clear indication that this highly organised kingdom is headed up by Satan, and is **not** divided, and as yet **not** overthrown.
- 4) Final analysis shows two kingdoms with their armies in conflict, the Kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan.

Colossians 1:12-13 [NIV] *“giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in **the kingdom of light**. For he has rescued us from **the dominion of darkness** and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves,”*

There are in the universe two kingdoms.

The Greek word translated “*dominion*” means authority, the authority that a king has over his kingdom.

All humanity is in this kingdom of darkness, Greek word used is “*skotos*” meaning obscurity.

Revelation 12:9 [NIV] *“The great dragon was hurled down, that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him.”*

Satan has deceived the majority of humanity by blinding them to the very reason why humans exist.

2 Corinthians 4:4 [NIV] *“The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.”*

How has Satan done this?

2 Corinthians 11:13-15 [NIV] *“For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, masquerading as apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light. It is not surprising, then, if his servants masquerade as servants of righteousness. Their end will be what their actions deserve.”*

Through certain human beings Satan presents himself as an angel of enlightenment.

Genesis 3:1 [NIV] *“Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, ‘Did God really say, ‘You must not eat from any tree in the garden’?”*

Satan started to do this from the very creation of the first human beings.

Satan attracted Eve’s attention and mesmerised her by his brightness, just as a snake will its victim just before it strikes a death blow.

Satan has the power over human beings because of his original creation by God.

Isaiah 14:12 [King James] *“How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations!”*

“Lucifer”, morning star the bringer of light.

A title that truly belongs to Jesus Christ [**Revelation 22:16**] but is assumed by Satan the antichrist [**2 John 7**].

Ezekiel 28:12, 14-15, 17 [NIV] *“Son of man, take up a lament concerning the king of Tyre and say to him: ‘This is what the Sovereign LORD says: “‘You were the model of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty.” ... “You were anointed as a guardian cherub, for so I ordained you. You were on the holy mount of God; you walked among the fiery stones. You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created till wickedness was found in you.” ... “Your heart became proud on account of your beauty, and you corrupted your wisdom because of your splendour. So I threw you to the earth; I made a spectacle of you before kings.”*

Satan was a perfect creation but his beauty and splendid brightness motivated him to become proud and deceived himself into thinking he could take the place of the Creator God.

This is the enemy we are in conflict with, individually and as a church.

Job 2:1-2 [NIV] *“On another day the angels came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came with them to present himself before him. And the LORD said to Satan, ‘Where have you come from?’ Satan answered the LORD, ‘From roaming through the earth and going to and fro in it.’”*

Satan in the days of Job still had access to the presence of the Creator God.

Revelation 12:10 [NIV] *“Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say: “Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ. **For the accuser of our brothers, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been hurled down.**”*

This scripture indicates that Satan still has access to the presence of the Creator God.

He is able to accuse Christians of their weaknesses, failures and sins before God’s throne.

Where are the “*heavenly realms*” where our enemy Satan has his dominion?

Genesis 1:1 [NIV] *“In the beginning God created the **heavens** and the earth.”*

Note “*heavens*” plural.

2 Chronicles 2:6 [NIV] *“But who is able to build a temple for him, since the heavens, even the **highest heavens**, cannot contain him? Who then am I to build a temple for him, except as a place to burn sacrifices before him?”*

“*Highest heaven*”. The Hebrew says literally, “*the heaven of heavens*”, suggesting a heaven that is as high above heaven as heaven is above the earth.

2 Corinthians 12:2-4 [NIV] *“I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was **caught up to the third heaven**. Whether it was in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows. And I know that this man, whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, but God knows, was caught up to paradise. He heard inexpressible things, things that man is not permitted to tell.”*

This scripture mentions a “*third heaven*.”

Ephesians 4:10 [NIV] *“He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than **all the heavens**, in order to fill the whole universe.)”*

“*All the heavens*” indicates that there must be more than two.

To my logical mind there must be three heavens as follows:-

The first heaven is the visible and natural with the sun, moon and stars that we can see with our eyes.

The third heaven [“*heaven above heavens*”] is God’s dwelling place.

When I say “God’s dwelling place” this is how God explains it for our benefit, who live in time and space.

It is difficult for humans to relate to God Who exists outside of time and space as a spirit being.

John 4:24 [NIV] *“**God is spirit**, and his worshippers must worship in spirit and in truth.”*

God is spirit.

Psalms 139:7-12 [NIV] *“**Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there. If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast. If I say, “Surely the darkness will hide me and the light become night around me,” even the darkness will not be dark to you; the night will shine like the day, for darkness is as light to you.**”*

The whole of this psalm gives us a human insight into the Creator God that we are to worship.

The second heaven must be between the first and the third, **this is the kingdom headquarters of Satan and his army of demons.**

This would explain why that sometimes when we know we have prayed according to God's Will and that He has heard us yet the messenger of God, one of His angels who is to respond to our prayer, is delayed in reaching us.

Daniel 10:2-20 [NIV] *“At that time I, Daniel, mourned for three weeks. I ate no choice food; no meat or wine touched my lips; and I used no lotions at all until the three weeks were over. On the twenty-fourth day of the first month, as I was standing on the bank of the great river, the Tigris, I looked up and there before me was a man dressed in linen, with a belt of the finest gold round his waist. His body was like chrysolite, his face like lightning, his eyes like flaming torches, his arms and legs like the gleam of burnished bronze, and his voice like the sound of a multitude. I, Daniel, was the only one who saw the vision; the men with me did not see it, but such terror overwhelmed them that they fled and hid themselves. So I was left alone, gazing at this great vision; I had no strength left, my face turned deathly pale and I was helpless. Then I heard him speaking, and as I listened to him, I fell into a deep sleep, my face to the ground. A hand touched me and set me trembling on my hands and knees. He said, “Daniel, you who are highly esteemed, consider carefully the words I am about to speak to you, and stand up, for I have now been sent to you.” And when he said this to me, I stood up trembling. Then he continued, “Do not be afraid, Daniel. **Since the first day that you set your mind to gain understanding and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard, and I have come in response to them. But the prince of the Persian kingdom resisted me twenty-one days.** Then Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, because I was detained there with the king of Persia. Now I have come to explain to you what will happen to your people in the future, for the vision concerns a time yet to come.” While he was saying this to me, I bowed with my face towards the ground and was speechless. Then one who looked like a man touched my lips, and I opened my mouth and began to speak. I said to the one standing before me, “I am overcome with anguish because of the vision, my lord, and I am helpless. How can I, your servant, talk with you, my lord? My strength is gone and I can hardly breathe.” Again the one who looked like a man touched me and gave me strength. “Do not be afraid, O man highly esteemed,” he said. “Peace! Be strong now; be strong.” When he spoke to me, I was strengthened and said, “Speak, my lord, since you have given me strength.” So he said, “Do you know why I have come to you? Soon I will return to fight against the prince of Persia, and when I go, the prince of Greece will come;”*

Note the first day Daniel prayed he was heard by God and an angel despatched to respond to his prayer but it took this angel three weeks of fighting to bring the response to Daniel and then only with the help of super angel Michael.

The “prince of Persia and Greece” depict the evil rulers who wished to harm Israel, who were under the power of evil spirits.

Daniel 12:1 [NIV] *“At that time Michael, the great prince who protects your people, will arise. There will be a time of distress such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then. But at that time your people, everyone whose name is found written in the book, will be delivered.”*

Michael is depicted as the super angel, given special charge watching over the interests and protecting Israel.

From these passages of scripture in Daniel we get an insight into the spiritual battle that centres around God's people and God's purposes.

We also see the staggering activity in the spirit world that was the result of Daniel's prayers.

When Daniel started to pray, according to God's Will, on earth, all the heavens were a scene of a great struggle between the angels of God and Satan's demons.

This is an example that gives us an insight into what prayer can do.

This example also indicates something else, that God's angels needed the prayers of Daniel to enable them to accomplish their mission.

Daniel continued to pray for 21 days without any sign of an answer.

What would have happened if he had given up on day 20?

Luke 18:1-8 [NIV] *“Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up. He said: “In a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God nor cared about men. And there was a widow in that town who kept coming to him with the plea, ‘Grant me justice against my adversary.’ “For some time he refused. But finally he said to himself, ‘Even though I don’t fear God or care about men, yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice, so that she won’t eventually wear me out with her coming!’” And the Lord said, “Listen to what the unjust judge says. And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off? I tell you, he will see that they get justice, and quickly. **However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?”**”*

Another example of persistent prayer and the end result if we don't give up too soon.

1 Thessalonians 5:17-18 [NIV] *“pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.”*

Continual prayer, when we know it is within God's Will, with continually thanking God for the way He will answer that prayer, as we wait on Him to answer in His way and at His time.

Luke 18:9-14 [NIV] *“To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everybody else, Jesus told this parable: “Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood up and prayed about himself: ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other men, robbers, evildoers, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.’ “But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, ‘God, have mercy on me, a sinner.’ “I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. **For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.**”*

Note that our prayers should always be made in a humble attitude, knowing that God owes us nothing and we are constantly dependent on His Love and mercy.

We have in measure identified the enemy and his headquarters.

Satan and his demons are stationed between us and the presence of our Creator God, our prayers when offered through our High Priest will always reach God's throne, but we have to resist Satan's influence constantly.

1 Peter 5:8-9 [NIV] *“Be self-controlled and alert. **Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion** looking for someone to devour. **Resist him**, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings.”*

Resist Satan by standing firm in our faith.

James 4:7 [NIV] *“Submit yourselves, then, to God. **Resist the devil**, and he will flee from you.”*

Although God and Satan are at war we don't have to fear Satan because of Christ's resurrection from the dead overcame Satan's power of death that he holds over all humanity.

Hebrews 2:14 [NIV] *“Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death, that is, the devil”*

Jesus Christ has taken away from Satan his most powerful weapon, death.

Next we need to know the tactics and the weapons that Satan uses and where the conflict is taking place.

2 Corinthians 10:3-5 [NIV] *“For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. **The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world.** On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish **strongholds.** We demolish **arguments** and every **pretension** that **sets itself up** against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every **thought** to make it obedient to Christ.”*

The weapons that Satan uses are not physical weapons.

This conflict is with spiritual beings so all the weapons will also be spiritual.

“Strongholds” – Greek *“ochurōma”* strongly held conviction, even when it is the result of Satan’s deception.

“Arguments” – Greek *“logismos”* human reasoning that starts from the wrong foundation or viewpoint.

“Pretension” – Greek *“hupsōma”* elevated attitude or thought, that is personal pride building a wall between us and our Creator God.

“Sets itself up” – Greek *“ēpairō”* to exalt ourselves above the revelation of God in His Word, the Christian Bible, our Handbook For Life.

“Thought” – Greek *“noema”* the exercising of our own mind, our own purpose.

These are all associated with our minds and human spirit.

This is where the conflict is taking place.

Satan is building in humans, strongholds of deception and doubt in what their Creator God says, in the their mind and human spirit.

It is our responsibility, as God’s representatives, to use spiritual weapons to breakdown these strongholds.

Note how often the word *“we”* is used in these scriptures, referring directly to every Christian.

We are to liberate the minds of human beings who are held captive by Satan, through deception and lies.

What a staggering assignment this is.

These strongholds that Satan is building in the minds of human beings, resists the truth of the gospel message of what God has done for all humanity through His only Son, Jesus Christ, our Saviour from death and the deception of our enemy Satan.

The major part of these strongholds that Satan has built in human beings are prejudices, preconceptions, doubt and ignorance.

When a person’s mind is already made up in advance no human argument, evidence or reason can change it.

The only way we can penetrate such a mind is by the most powerful spiritual weapons we have.

Revelation 12:9-11 [NIV] *“The great dragon was hurled down, that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him. Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say: “Now have come the salvation and the power and the*

kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ. For the accuser of our brothers, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been hurled down. **They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death.**"

We overcome the influence of Satan by the good news of Christ's sacrifice for all humanity and our own example of a changed life.

Colossians 2:13-15 [NIV] "*When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, having cancelled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross. And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.*"

By His death on the cross and His resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ took away Satan's power over us, the fear of physical death.

Hebrews 2:14 [NIV] "*Since the children have flesh and blood, he [Jesus Christ] too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death, that is, the devil"*

Accepting the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, His death as a substitute for our deserved death because of our sins, takes away our fear of death.

Satan is determined to stop anyone understanding this fact as it is the key to his defeat.

Revelation 12:10 [NIV] "*Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say: "Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ. For the accuser [Satan see context] of our brothers, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been hurled down."*

Satan wants us to feel guilty and as long as he does we cannot defeat his influence.

On the cross of Jesus Christ God dealt with past, present and future guilt.

Colossians 2:13 [NIV] "*When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins,*"

God forgives all our sins through belief in what He has done for all humanity by Jesus Christ's life, death and resurrection.

Colossians 2:14 [NIV] "*having cancelled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross.*"

We no longer have to depend on obedience to a written set of laws for salvation.

Never knowing if we have done enough to please God, constantly feeling guilty.

Romans 10:4 [NIV] "*Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes.*"

Not the end of the law as part of God's Word and code of conduct but the end of obedience to the law as a means of righteousness.

Righteousness is now achieved by faith in what God has done for us through Jesus Christ.

2 Corinthians 5:21 [NIV] "*God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*"

Jesus who lived a perfect sinless life was made sin with our sinfulness so that we might be made righteous with His imputed, that is credited, righteousness.

Romans 4:18, 21-25 [NIV] *“Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed and so became the father of many nations, just as it had been said to him, “So shall your offspring be.” ... “being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised. This is why “it was credited to him as righteousness.” The words “it was credited to him” were written not for him alone, but also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness, for us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification.”*

This is how we are made right with God, under the New Covenant, that Jesus the Son of God brought as a message from God the Father and ratified by His poured out blood.

Who now resurrected to life, administers from heaven as our High Priest of this New Covenant.

2 Corinthians 2:14 [NIV] *“But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumphal procession in Christ and through us spreads everywhere the fragrance of the knowledge of him.”*

God wants us to share in this triumph of Jesus Christ over the entire Satanic kingdom.

What did readers understand by a triumph in those days?

It was a Roman victory parade, headed by a procession of all the prisoners of the vanquished army.

These captives from the enemy’s conscripted army were then offered the choice to volunteer to fight against the enemy who had forced them to fight in his army.

All who accept Christ’s victory over Satan are offered the chance to fight against him and his demons.

Matthew 28:18-20 [NIV] *“Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”*

Jesus now has through his victory over Satan all power and authority in heaven and earth.

This includes Satan’s dominion, or kingdom.

“Therefore” – as a result of this we have a job of work to do for our Saviour Jesus Christ.

2 Corinthians 5:16-17 [NIV] *“So from now on we regard no-one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!”*

We now have a new life, freed from the penalty of sin and the fear of physical death.

2 Corinthians 5:18-20 [NIV] *“All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men’s sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ’s behalf: Be reconciled to God.”*

We have been given the job of proclaiming the message of reconciliation.

The relationship that the first humans rejected through sinful rebellion in the Garden of Eden, is being restored through our Saviour Jesus Christ.

If we fail to fulfil our part in this proclaiming the good news about Jesus Christ we are failing to be soldiers in God's army and will **not** share in Christ's victory over Satan and the evil he is promoting on earth.